



SECTION I: ACCOMPLISHMENTS



JUDGES

Judicial Committees

The judicial committees address Court-related issues and consist of bankruptcy judges and management staff from the Clerk's Office. These committees are responsible for providing feedback regarding Court operations and administrative issues. During 2000, the standing judicial committees were:

- Executive Committee
- Case Management Committee
- Chapter 13 Committee
- Education and Training Committee
- *Pro Se* Committee
- Rules Committee
- United States Trustee Liaison Committee

The *ad hoc* committees were:

- Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee
- Attorney Discipline Committee
- Bankruptcy Fraud Committee
- Long Range Planning Committee

The Honorable Lisa Hill Fenning Resigns

After 15 years of service as a United States bankruptcy judge for the Central District of California, the Honorable Lisa Hill Fenning resigned from her judicial appointment, effective April 30, 2000, to become a private mediator. Since her appointment in 1985, Judge Fenning chaired a number of judicial committees, developed extensive local practice forms, pioneered a variety of calendaring and case management innovations, and was instrumental in addressing bankruptcy fraud issues as chair of the Court's *ad hoc* Bankruptcy Foreclosure Scam Task Force.

Sheri Bluebond Appointed Bankruptcy Judge

Ms. Sheri Bluebond was selected to serve a 14-year term as bankruptcy judge for the Central District of California in September 2000, and was officially sworn in on February 1, 2001. Judge Bluebond specialized in bankruptcy law prior to her judicial appointment, was active in various bankruptcy law organizations, and has written a number of bankruptcy-related articles in legal publications. Judge Bluebond filled the judicial vacancy caused by the departure of Judge Lisa Hill Fenning and maintains her chambers in the Court's Los Angeles Division.

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Six Bankruptcy Judges Reappointed During 2000

United States bankruptcy judges are appointed to 14-year terms by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. The Central District of California bankruptcy judges who were reappointed during 2000 are:

Honorable Geraldine Mund, Chief Judge -

First appointed as a bankruptcy judge in 1984, the Honorable Geraldine Mund was reappointed as a bankruptcy judge on August 27, 2000. On January 1, 2000, Chief Judge Mund commenced her second three-year term as chief bankruptcy judge for the Central District of California. Chief Judge Mund maintains her chambers in the San Fernando Valley Division.

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Honorable James N. Barr - The Honorable James N. Barr was reappointed to a second term as a bankruptcy judge, effective January 12, 2001. Judge Barr maintains his chambers in the Santa Ana Division and also manages a partial caseload in the Riverside Division through the use of video conference hearing technology.

Honorable Samuel L. Bufford - Effective March 23, 2000, the Honorable Samuel L. Bufford was reappointed to serve as a bankruptcy judge. Judge Bufford maintains his chambers in the Los Angeles Division and was first appointed as a bankruptcy judge in 1985.

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Honorable David N. Naugle - The Honorable David N. Naugle was reappointed to serve as a bankruptcy judge on July 13, 2000. Originally appointed as a bankruptcy judge in 1976, Judge Naugle maintains his chambers in the Riverside Division.

Honorable Barry Russell - Serving the Central District as a bankruptcy judge since 1974, the Honorable Barry Russell was reappointed to a new term commencing August 27, 2000. Judge Russell, who maintains his chambers in the Los Angeles Division, serves on the Bankruptcy Appellate Panel for the Ninth Circuit where he is the presiding judge. Judge Russell is also the Administrator for the Bankruptcy Court's Mediation Program.



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Honorable John E. Ryan - Originally appointed a bankruptcy judge on October 6, 1986, the Honorable John E. Ryan was sworn in for his second term on August 4, 2000. Judge Ryan sits on the Ninth Circuit Bankruptcy Appellate Panel. He maintains his chambers in the Santa Ana Division and also manages a partial caseload in the Riverside Division through the use of video conference hearing technology.

U. S. Trustee Liaison Committee Addresses Trustee Expense Process

The Court approved a revised general order that clarified and streamlined the budget motion process in chapter 7 asset cases, making it consistent with the Ninth Circuit decision in In re Jenkins. The Court's United States Trustee Liaison Committee, comprised of several bankruptcy judges and members of the Office of the United States Trustee, revised the general order. Panel trustees provided the Committee with extensive input on the budget motion procedures during the revision process. The resulting General Order 00-01 was signed on March 8, 2000 and was later incorporated into the revised Local Bankruptcy Rules as new Local Bankruptcy Rule 2016-2. The related form, revised by the Committee in June 2000, became required Local Bankruptcy Rules Form F 2016-2.1 and is included on the Court's web site under *Rules and Forms/Local Rules Forms*.

Chapter 13 Committee Revises Procedures and Forms

Following an extensive review that included solicitation of comments from the public and chapter 13 trustees, the Chapter 13 Committee revised the procedures for chapter 13 cases and the chapter 13 plan form. The revisions updated the procedures and clarified the respective responsibilities of the Court, the debtor, the debtor's attorney, and the standing trustee. Formerly included in the Local Bankruptcy Rules as an appendix, the rewritten procedures became effective on January 2, 2001, as new Local Bankruptcy Rule 3015-1 (*Procedures Regarding Chapter 13 Cases*). The revised chapter 13 plan form was designated Local Bankruptcy Rules Form F 3015-1.1 and is available on the Court's web site under *Rules and Forms /Local Rules Forms*.

Local Bankruptcy Rules Revised

The Court's Local Bankruptcy Rules were revised during the year and became effective on January 2, 2001. General orders governing chapter 13 procedures and compensation and trustee reimbursement procedures for chapter 7 asset cases were incorporated as new Local Bankruptcy Rules, while general orders governing the Bankruptcy Court's Mediation Program and attorney disciplinary procedures were included as appendices. In addition to these substantive changes, the lettering and numbering of paragraphs were also modified to conform to the format of the Federal Rules of Bankruptcy Procedure. The revised Local Bankruptcy Rules were made available on the Court's web site in both an unabridged version and an abridged version (i.e., without the Court's Comments).

Court Expands *Pro Bono* Programs to All Divisions

The Court, in cooperation with local bar associations, continued to expand the *pro bono* programs targeted toward the district's relatively high percentage of *pro se* debtors. *Pro se* debtors meeting certain eligibility requirements may receive free legal assistance from volunteer attorneys under these programs in all divisions of the Court.

In September 2000, local attorneys in cooperation with the Northern Division established a *pro bono* program to help *pro se* debtors understand their legal rights before they request the Court to approve a reaffirmation agreement. On a rotating basis, participating attorneys make themselves available to *pro se* debtors in the Northern Division prior to reaffirmation agreement hearings. In the first four months of this new program, 45 *pro se* debtors were offered *pro bono* reaffirmation agreement assistance. In early 2001, the Riverside Division initiated a *pro bono* program coordinated by the Public Service Law Corporation to assist *pro se* debtors in Section 523 and Section 727 related adversary proceedings.

In the Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley divisions, a *pro bono* program known as the Debtor Assistance Project (DAP) was established in 1997 by the Los Angeles County Bar Association's Commercial Law and Bankruptcy Section and Public Counsel, a not-for-profit legal organization, with the assistance and cooperation of the judges. Information about the DAP is prominently featured on the Court's web site, including program-related public notices, educational materials on reaffirmation agreements in both English and Spanish, and training and sign-up materials for attorneys interested in volunteering under the program. The training materials include a brief overview of bankruptcy law and procedure and the issues that might arise when representing low income chapter 7 debtors. Since its inception, over 200 attorneys have volunteered their services under the program.

During the year 2000, the DAP provided hundreds of qualified low income clients with assistance in preparing voluntary chapter 7 petitions and free legal representation in non-dischargeability adversary proceedings. Project attorneys assisted 720 debtors in understanding their rights prior to reaffirmation agreement hearings.

Through the joint efforts of the Orange County Bar Association, the Orange County Bankruptcy Forum, the Orange County Public Law Center, and the Division's judges and clerks, a *pro bono* program was established in the Santa Ana Division in 1999. The program, which was patterned after a similar program established in the Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley divisions, was designed to help *pro se* debtors better understand their rights prior to reaffirmation agreement hearings. Each month, judges in the Santa Ana Division consolidate their reaffirmation agreement hearings into one calendar to afford volunteer attorneys an opportunity to provide counseling one hour before the hearings. The judges in the division hear these matters on a rotating basis from month to month. (See Table 1 below.)

Table 1 Central District of California - Bankruptcy Court <i>Pro Bono</i> Programs: 2000					
Division	Date Program Introduced	Debtors Dischargeability Assistance		Debtors Reaffirmation Agreement Assistance	
		Offered	Provided	Offered	Provided
Los Angeles	10/97	1,115	145	290	720*
San Fernando Valley	10/97	550		266	
Santa Ana	11/99	N/A	N/A	139	97
Northern	9/00	N/A	N/A	45	36
Total		1,665	145	740	853*

*Includes both co-debtors if jointly filed.

Bankruptcy Mediation Program Assists the Court and Litigants

Recognizing that formal litigation of disputes in bankruptcy cases and adversary proceedings frequently impose significant economic burdens on parties and often delays resolution of those disputes, the Court established an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Program in 1995 that is believed to be the largest of its type in the nation. Commonly known as the Bankruptcy Mediation Program, this program enables parties to resolve their disputes more quickly, at less cost, and without the stress and pressure associated with litigation.

As of December 31, 2000, 2,033 matters have been assigned to the Mediation Program since its introduction. Of the matters assigned, 1,906 matters were concluded while 127 remained pending. Of the 1,906 completed matters, 1,204 (63%) were settled and 702 (37%) were not settled. Matters not settled resume litigation and are decided by a bankruptcy judge. Below are some key statistics about the Mediation Program since its inception. (See Table 2 below.)

Table 2 Central District of California - Bankruptcy Court Mediation Program Statistics through December 31, 2000	
Total number matters assigned to ADR since July 1995	2,033
Total number of matters concluded 1,204 matters settled (63%) 702 matters not settled (37%)	1,906
Current number of pending matters	127
Number of mediators	215

A computer program developed in-house tracks all matters assigned to the Mediation Program, monitors the mediators' assignments and availability, and generates numerous types of statistical reports almost instantly by such categories as individual judge, division, chapter, matter description, and status of matter.

A comprehensive questionnaire enables the Court to determine the participants' perception of the Mediation Program. Data from these questionnaires are analyzed using a statistics computer program. Of the 4,984 questionnaires mailed to parties and attorneys who have attended mediation conferences, 1,820 completed questionnaires have been returned to the Court (representing a return rate of approximately 37% which is considered excellent in view of the fact that questionnaires are anonymous and voluntarily submitted). Data from the completed questionnaires are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3 Participant Satisfaction With Mediation Program as of December 31, 2000	
Respondents satisfied with the mediation process.	83%
Respondents who would use the mediation program again.	93%
Respondents who considered their settlement fair.	81%
Respondents who believed parties will comply with settlement.	87%
Respondents who believed mediator was effective in encouraging clients to engage in a meaningful negotiations.	84%
Respondents who believed mediator was effective in getting the attorneys to engage in meaningful negotiations.	85%

The Central District continues to benefit from the Mediation Program, enabling judges to focus on matters truly requiring judicial intervention. The Mediation Program also provides the judiciary with much-needed data demonstrating that mediation can resolve cases more quickly and at less cost while reducing the stress and pressure of litigation. The Mediation Program also provides a model for implementing other successful programs throughout the United States.

The following charts display the matters assigned to the Mediation Program by chapter, as well as the distribution of mediation matters within the various divisions of the Court (See Figures 1 and 2 below.)

Figure 1
Matters Assigned to Mediation Program by Chapter
(August 1995-December 2000)

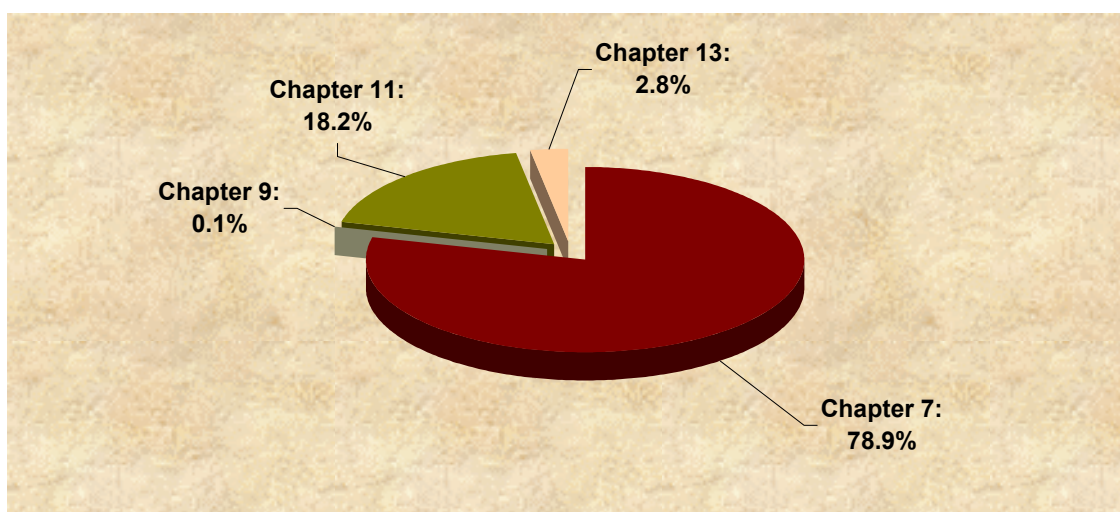
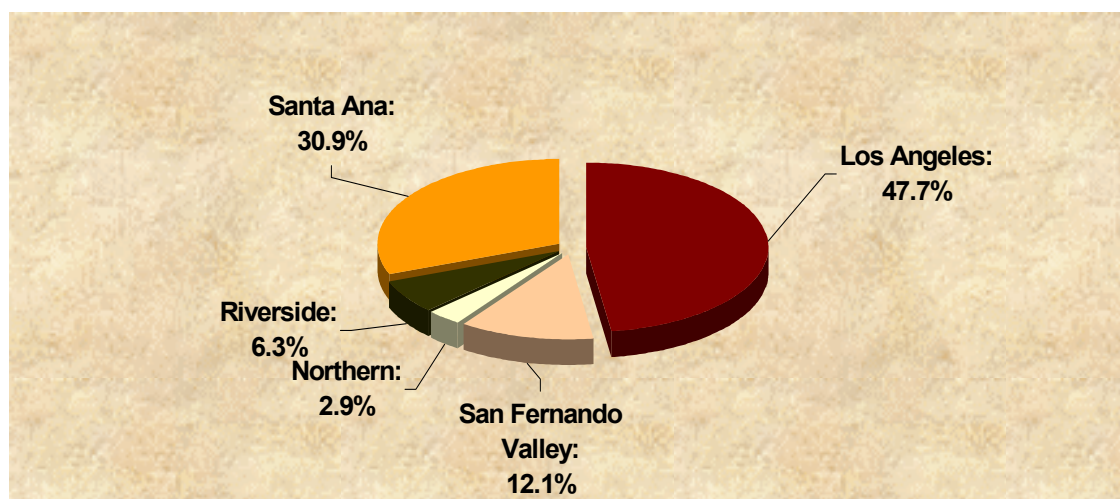


Figure 2
Distribution of Central District Mediation Matters
(August 1995-December 2000)



Judicial Workload Equalization Program Ends with Completion of Fifth Round

Initiated to help equalize judicial workloads throughout the Ninth Circuit through the intra-circuit assignment of cases, the Judicial Workload Equalization Program drew to a close in August 2000. Originally piloted in 1996 with the reassignment of 200 Los Angeles Division and San Fernando Valley Division adversary proceedings to judges in the Ninth Circuit, the program expanded to the Riverside Division in 1997. During the life of the Riverside Division program, a total of 500 adversary proceedings (in groups of 100) were assigned to three bankruptcy judges from the District of Oregon: the Honorable Elizabeth L. Perris, the Honorable Randall L. Dunn, and the Honorable Frank R. Alley, III.

Visiting Bankruptcy Judges Provide Support to the Northern and Los Angeles Divisions

The Honorable Richard T. Ford, recalled bankruptcy judge from the Eastern District of California, returned to the Northern Division as a visiting judge several times in 2000. During his visits, Judge Ford heard matters related to adversary proceedings from the Honorable Robin L. Riblet's caseload. The Honorable James M. Marlar, bankruptcy judge for the District of Arizona, also heard a variety of matters in the Northern Division as a visiting judge in August 2000.

In September and October 2000, the Honorable John L. Peterson from the Bankruptcy Court, District of Montana, heard 14 Los Angeles Division adversary proceedings previously assigned to Judge Lisa Fenning. Initially, Judge Peterson appeared via video conference from Montana and then traveled to Los Angeles for trials the week of October 30, 2000.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Court's Web Site Upgraded/Streamlined

The Court debuted its completely redesigned and restructured web site to the public on February 29, 2000. Believed to be one of the most comprehensive court web sites in the nation, the redesigned web site enables the user to access information through a series of "pull-down" menus or from corresponding "buttons." In response to feedback from users, additional revisions to the web site were completed on May 3, 2000, resulting in faster download times and other improvements.

"THE FOLKS WHO I DEALT WITH WERE ALL PROFESSIONAL, CONSIDERATE AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, HELPED PUT ME AT EASE."

CUSTOMER SERVICE RESPONSE

During the year, the Court's web site was also enhanced to include current information on high profile bankruptcy cases, notices of sale of estate property, a register of federal and state government addresses, and other useful information. The Court's web site (www.cacb.uscourts.gov) has been visited approximately 300,000 times by the public since it was established in 1997.

Customer Service Training Program Initiated

The Clerk's Office developed a program designed to improve the courtesy and professionalism of staff members in their interactions with the public. The new program - *The Public: How Do We Deal with Them?* - consists of a live presentation, a video, and class participation. Conducted for the Intake Section of the Los Angeles Division in the last quarter of 2000, the customer service program will be offered to the other divisions in 2001.

Online Case Files

Online case files were first introduced in the Los Angeles, Northern, and San Fernando Valley divisions in 1998, and expanded to the Riverside and Santa Ana divisions in 1999. (See page 16.) By imaging the bankruptcy case documents most requested by the public and making them available through the Court's webPACER system, the Court has enabled the public to review and print online case file documents 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from any computer equipped with a modem. In 2000, electronic images of nearly four million pages of documents were added to the Court's online case files.

Online case file automation is integrated into the Court's existing case management system. High-speed imaging equipment is used to scan case documents, and bar-coded cover sheets link each image to the appropriate online case file. During the year, this process was streamlined by the Clerk's Office through the introduction of enhanced case management software for several document types. (See article: *Case Management Software Enhancements Introduced District-Wide*, page 32.) Before being made available to the public, imaged documents are quality controlled for legibility and to ensure they are linked to the appropriate case and docket entry.

In addition to the bankruptcy case documents most requested by the public, the Court also images case documents in certain "high profile" cases. In 2000, complete online case files became available in the chapter 11 bankruptcy cases of Frederick's of Hollywood (LA00-29824ER), First Alliance Mortgage Company (SA00-12370LR), and Edwards Theatres Circuit, Inc. (SA00-16475LR).

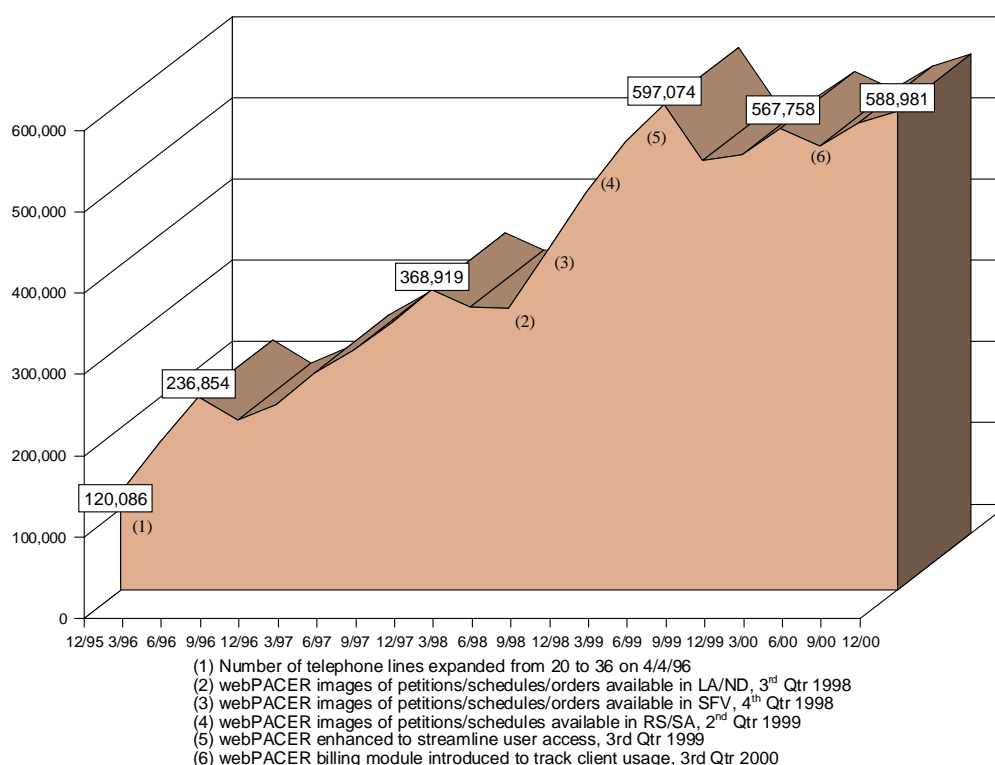
Table 4 Online Case File Availability							
Division	First File Date of Imaged Documents						
	Petitions and Schedules	Amended Schedules	Ch 13 Plans	Ch 11 Plans	Signed Orders	Orders Closing Case	BNC Orders*
Los Angeles	5/19/98	5/19/98	5/19/98	5/3/99	8/3/98	9/3/99	6/1/99
Riverside	5/17/99	11/29/99	6/1/99	6/1/99	6/1/99	3/1/00	1/31/00
Santa Ana	4/6/99	4/6/99	4/6/99	8/16/99	8/16/99	5/8/00	12/1/99
Northern	4/17/98	9/1/98	4/17/98	5/3/99	9/10/98	5/1/00	9/10/98
San Fernando Valley	10/1/98	11/4/99	10/1/98	5/3/99	11/2/98	11/27/00	1/11/99

*Includes discharge and dismissal orders generated by the Bankruptcy Noticing Center (BNC).

webPACER Usage Increases to Record Level

The Court's webPACER system provides the public with remote computer access to the Court's online case files 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Despite a 21% decline in bankruptcy filings in the year 2000, webPACER usage increased to a record 2,277,370 minutes during the year, a 3% increase over the 2,212,807 minutes reported in 1999. Strong webPACER usage indicates the continued growth of public acceptance of electronic access to online case files and contributed close to \$1.3 million in revenue for the federal judiciary. (See Figure 3 below.)

Figure 3
Central District of California - Bankruptcy Court
webPACER Usage in Minutes by Quarter: 1995-2000



webPACER Billing Enhancement Implemented District-Wide

Responding to requests by attorneys, the Clerk's Office modified webPACER to enable users to easily identify billable minutes for their clients. Using a comment field, the webPACER user can enter a client's name, account number, or other unique reference code that results in a summary for that client in the user's monthly webPACER billing. Before rollout for public use in September 2000, the modifications were fully tested in the Los Angeles Division.

Public Usage of the Voice Case Information System (VCIS) Remains Strong

The Voice Case Information System (VCIS) is an automated telephone system providing the public with basic bankruptcy case information through the use of a touch-tone telephone. This free service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and allows users to access case information such as case number, case filing date, chapter, status of case, and asset information. Although the estimated number of calls for this popular service decreased 7% from the record 580,800 calls in 1999 to 543,793 calls in 2000, the decline was far less than the 21% drop in bankruptcy filings. (See Table 5 below.)

Table 5 Estimated Voice Case Information System (VCIS) Usage: 1999-2000				
Division	Total Calls 1999	Total Calls 2000	Number Change	Percent Change
Los Angeles	264,000	285,000	21,000	8%
Riverside	108,000	91,000	-17,000	-16%
Santa Ana	90,000	69,000	-21,000	-23%
Northern	38,000	31,000	-7,000	-18%
San Fernando Valley	85,000	68,000	-17,000	-20%
District Total	585,000	544,000	-41,000	-7%

Public Continues Appreciation of Customer Service

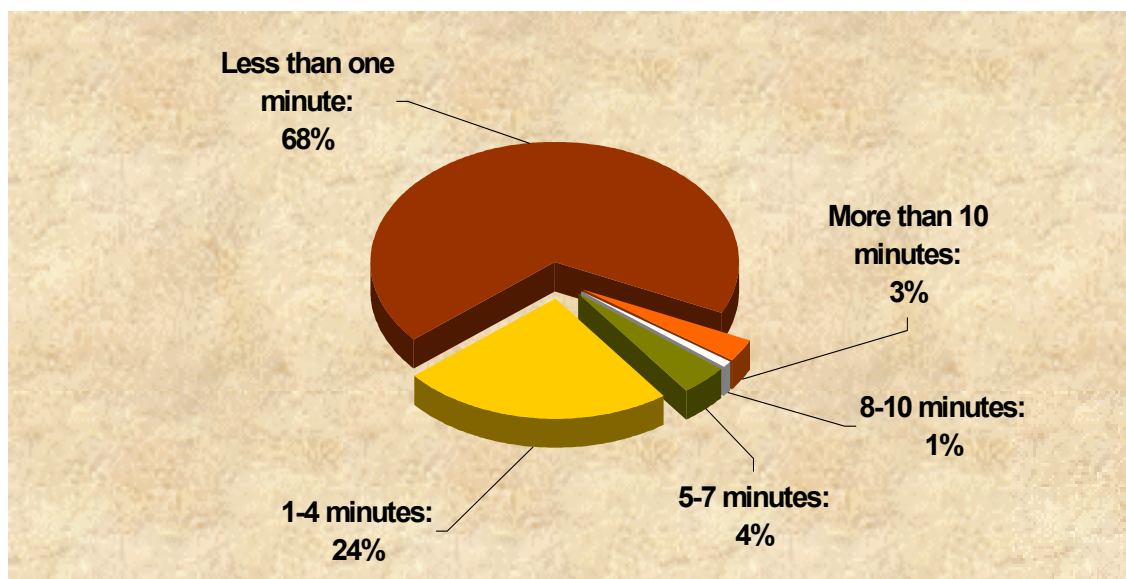
The *Customer Service Questionnaire* furnishes the Court with important feedback about the quality of customer service provided to the public. In addition to capturing traditional "satisfaction with service" information on a wide variety of variables, the questionnaire allows respondents to write in comments and suggestions. *Customer Service Questionnaires* are available at all divisions of the Court, as well as on the Court's web site.

An analysis of the responses received from January through December 2000 reflects the following:

- Over 91% of the respondents rated the *overall service* of the Court as excellent.
- Nearly 94% of the respondents rated the employee who served them as excellent in the category of *courtesy/attitude*.
- More than 91% of the respondents rated the employee who served them as excellent in the category of *competent/helpful*.
- The *convenience of the facility* was rated as excellent by 75% of those responding, while *facility appearance* was rated as excellent by over 85% of the respondents.

Providing customers with fast service is an important goal of the Bankruptcy Court. In 2000, an impressive 68% of the respondents reported that they were served within one minute of their arrival, compared with 57% in 1999 and 45% in 1998. Moreover, less than 3% of the respondents reported waiting more than 10 minutes, compared with 5% in 1999 and 16% in 1998. The following chart illustrates the length of wait for service reported by respondents to the *Customer Service Questionnaire*.

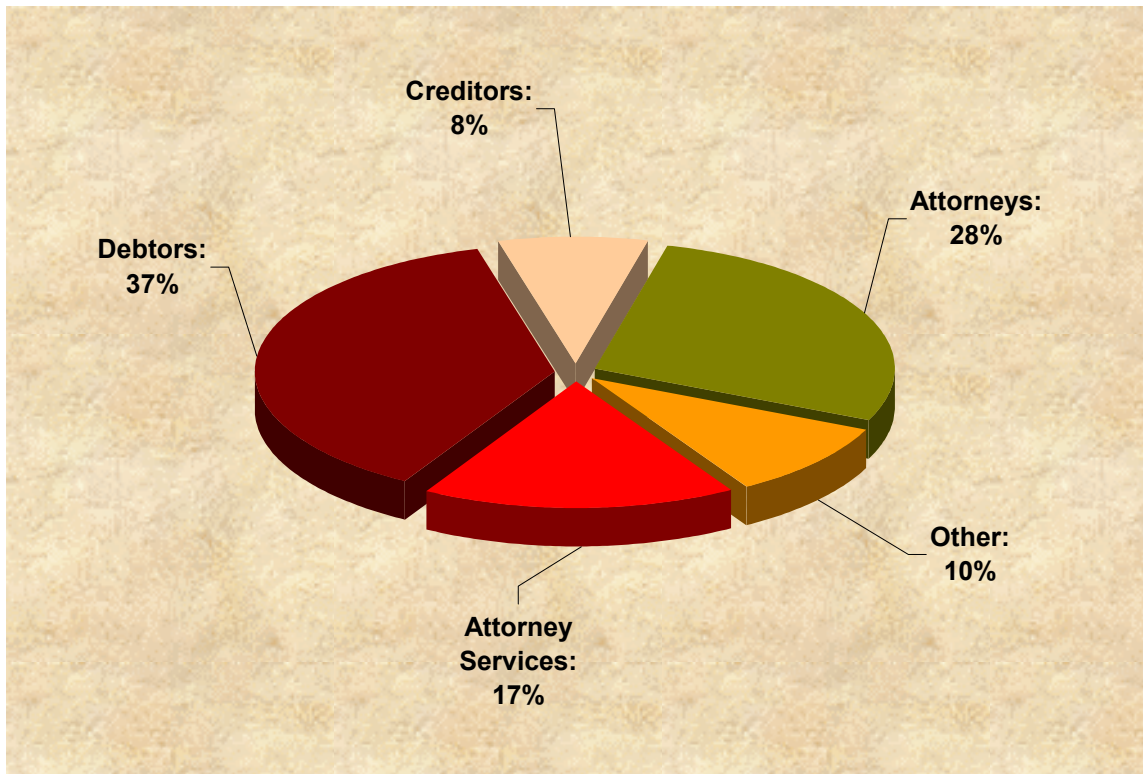
Figure 4
Customer Service Questionnaire: Length of Wait
(January-December 2000)



The following table and chart summarize the services used by *Customer Service Questionnaire* respondents and the types of customers who responded:

Table 6 Customer Service Questionnaire: Services Used (Multiple responses possible)	
Intake/Filing Counter	66.6%
Records	17.4%
Public Information Office	7.2%
Case Administration	2.9%
Other	5.7%

Figure 5
Customer Service Questionnaire: Who Responded
(January-December 2000)



Drop Box Filing Provides Customer Service Enhancement

The Court provides customers with the added convenience of filing documents outside of normal business hours by making drop boxes available in the Los Angeles, Santa Ana, and San Fernando Valley divisions from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. In 2000, the Riverside Division expanded its drop box hours to make this option available to filers from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (The Northern Division does not offer a drop box.) Drop boxes also can be used by the public during business hours to avoid having to wait in line. Documents placed in the drop box receive a "filed" stamp reflecting the date it was deposited in the drop box. Since documents from the drop box can be processed outside of the busiest office hours, this service also helps the Court better handle its workload. In 2000, an estimated 251,658 documents were filed using drop boxes in the four participating divisions, approximately 8% of all documents filed with the Court. (See Table 7 below.)

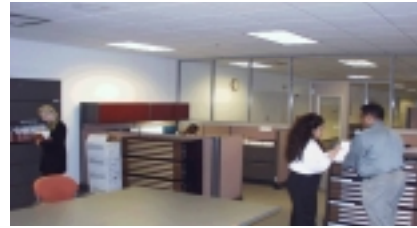
Table 7 Estimated Number of Bankruptcy Pleadings Left In Self-Service Drop Boxes: 2000					
<div> <div>Division</div> <div>Document</div> </div>	Los Angeles	Riverside	Santa Ana	San Fernando Valley	District*
Documents With Fees	9,883	5,215	3,218	4,095	22,411
Documents Without Fees	116,025	45,711	38,611	28,900	229,247
TOTAL	125,908	50,926	41,829	32,995	251,658

*The Northern Division does not have a drop box.

FACILITIES/EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

New Audio Tape Room Completed in the Los Angeles Division

A temperature-controlled audio tape storage room was built out in the Courtroom Services area of the Los Angeles Division to improve the security of audio tape recordings of hearings. Utilizing systems furniture panels and plexiglass windows, the spacious new area features room for additional storage and an area for reviewing and duplicating tapes. The new tape room is sound-insulated to minimize the escape of sound into the adjacent area occupied by team members.



Los Angeles Division Audio Tape Room

Office Space for Court Resources Remodeled/Expanded

Offices of the Court Resources Division, which serves the district-wide personnel needs of the Court, underwent a major remodeling and expansion. The reception area was redesigned to improve public access and meet standards imposed by the Americans with Disabilities Act; existing office space was reconfigured to accommodate the new team-based structure; and new office space was added to house analysts. A conference room was enlarged and a smaller conference room was added for confidential employee conferences and interviews. Testing rooms were equipped with networked computers for testing job applicants.

Public Carrels Modified District-Wide

The Riverside and Santa Ana divisions completed a project modifying carrels in public areas by reducing the height of the partition walls. Patterned after projects already completed in the Los Angeles, Northern, and San Fernando Valley divisions, the modifications allow Clerk's Office staff to better monitor records checked out to customers, resulting in improved case file security.



Modified Public Carrels in the Riverside Division

Court Demonstrates Ability to Manage Offsite Operations During the Democratic National Convention

Supporting efforts by the City of Los Angeles to reduce traffic congestion in downtown Los Angeles while addressing the possibility of demonstrations at the courthouse during the week of the Democratic National Convention, the Court undertook extensive measures to minimize risks to personnel, the public, and Court records and property. Services at the Los Angeles Division were dramatically reduced and basic operations were shifted to offsite locations.

Prior to the week of the convention, the Clerk's Office took numerous steps to ensure the Court's readiness to continue operations, regardless of events. To enable both judicial and Clerk's Office operations to function from remote locations, technical staff modified the Court's automated systems to allow offsite access to cashiering, case management, calendaring, and e-mail systems. To safeguard bankruptcy case files, Records staff archived files for 172,000 closed bankruptcy cases to the National Archives and Records Administration within an 18-day period. To put this achievement into perspective, the *entire district* archived files for 96,152 closed bankruptcy cases and adversary proceedings during all of 1999. In addition, all remaining open bankruptcy case files, adversary proceedings, and dockets in the Records Section were temporarily moved to the basement of the Federal Building at 300 North Los Angeles Street, where the risk for damage or destruction was greatly reduced.

During the convention week, several Los Angeles Division judges held court in offsite locations (i.e., the Richard H. Chambers Court of Appeals Building in Pasadena, the Santa Ana Division, and the San Fernando Valley Division). Other Los Angeles Division judges either postponed their calendars or heard a minimal number of matters at the Los Angeles Division. While the majority of Los Angeles Division staff took a combination of annual and administrative leave during the convention week, a special team of employees staffed two emergency Intake windows and other essential operations that were centralized on the ninth floor of the Edward R. Roybal Federal Building and Courthouse in Los Angeles, where increased security could be provided. Other Los Angeles Division staff provided service to the public at five Intake windows at the Santa Ana Division opened specifically to serve filers of documents meant to be filed in the Los Angeles Division. Real-time processing made available by special networking between the two divisions enabled staff to cashier bankruptcy petitions and other documents filed in Santa Ana while receiving Los Angeles Division case numbers, judge and trustee assignments, etc. In all, 389 Los Angeles Division bankruptcy petitions were processed during the convention week, 135 in Los Angeles and 254 in Santa Ana, representing about 70% of the bankruptcy petitions typically filed in Los Angeles.

Although throngs of demonstrators materialized at the buildings housing the Los Angeles Division, no damage or injuries were reported. Moreover, the Court confirmed its ability to handle offsite operations should an emergency necessitate the closure of one of its divisions in the future.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Staff Restructuring/Reduction Completed

In response to a substantial reduction in personnel funding due to a decline in case filings and a new, less generous Administrative Office staffing formula, the Clerk's Office implemented its first staff reduction plan in 2000. In addition to instituting a hiring freeze (with very limited exceptions), the Clerk's Office developed and implemented a methodology aimed at retaining a well-trained workforce, while minimizing the impact of the staff reduction on Court operations and customer service.

In anticipation of the reduction in personnel funding, the Clerk's Office reviewed all job titles occupied by operations staff and identified the skill sets most needed by the Court. Obsolete job titles were eliminated and replaced with four new job titles to better reflect the skill sets developed through cross-training. All operations staff were afforded the opportunity to apply for the new positions, and those who did not apply were notified that their old position titles were subject to abolishment based upon the needs of the Court.

After interviews and an assessment of each applicant's abilities, employees were selected for the new positions based upon their breadth of technical proficiency and ranking on teamwork and interpersonal skills. Once the new positions were filled, the Court determined the positions to be abolished based on the multiplicity of skills and cross-functionality desired by the Court. Reductions in administrative staff resulted either through the direct abolishment of departmental position titles deemed less essential than others within the same department or through seniority within federal service.

Separated staff received 60 days' notice with pay and were relieved of their regular job duties to enable them to seek other employment. To assist separated staff in locating outside employment, the Court established a career transition center in the Los Angeles Division in conjunction with the Office of Personnel Management. Staffed by the Court Resources Division, the center was equipped with computer workstations with Internet access, printers, a copier, telephones, a fax machine, and a wide variety of resource materials. The center also provided individual counseling and group workshops on such topics as developing a career action plan, assessing one's job skills, resume writing, interviewing skills, and job search techniques. At the expiration of the 60-day period, separated employees who had not found employment within the federal government became entitled to severance pay.

Computer-Based Testing of Applicants Introduced

To improve upon the employee selection process, Human Resources implemented computer-based testing of applicants' clerical skills (i.e., spelling, grammar, and math) on March 1, 2000. Previously, applicants manually completed these tests assessing their clerical skills. The new testing also assists Human Resources staff to assess the general computer skills of the applicants.

Tuition Reimbursement Program Graduates Four Employees

Providing financial assistance to Court employees pursuing work-related educational goals since 1997, the Court's Tuition Reimbursement Program helped four employees receive college degrees during the year. Overall, 14 employees received nearly \$12,000 under this program during 2000.

Thrift Savings Plan Overview Provided to Staff

Human Resources developed and presented an innovative district-wide program to improve employees' understanding of the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), a retirement savings plan for federal employees. Using a series of easy-to-understand scenarios, the Human Resources specialist discussed personal retirement needs and the pitfalls of not adequately or properly planning for the future. The two 1½-hour sessions featured exercises for staff to calculate their expected financial positions at retirement, based on a number of variables such as investment strategies, levels of ongoing investment contributions, years of service, and age at retirement.

Traumatic Injury and Workers' Compensation Training Provided to Managers/Supervisors

Human Resources staff trained all managers and supervisors throughout the district on how to handle an on-the-job injury, including the completion of the applicable Office of Workers' Compensation Program forms. As part of this effort, Human Resources created checklists outlining actions to be taken in the event that an employee or member of the public is injured on Court premises. The forms also list emergency contacts specific to each division. The program included training on how to distinguish between traumatic injuries and occupational diseases and the proper way to assist and/or transport seriously injured persons.

Extern Processing and Orientation Procedures Improved

During 2000, over 65 judicial externs provided volunteer support to judges throughout the district. To improve upon the processing and training of incoming externs, the Court developed new procedures, forms, and an updated training program. Working with the Training Department, Human Resources staff developed a comprehensive quarterly orientation program for new externs that addressed particular judicial needs identified by the Court's Education Committee. To enhance Court security, Human Resources worked with the U. S. Marshals Service to develop an expedited procedure for conducting records checks for all externs. New color-coded identification badges prominently displaying an expiration date were also designed and issued.

Divisions Provided with Digital Cameras

Digital cameras were purchased for all divisional offices, and representatives from each office were trained in the use of the cameras. The new cameras enable each division to process its own employee photo identification cards, thereby eliminating the need for new employees in the outlying divisions to travel to the Los Angeles Division. The cameras are also used to take pictures for the staff rolodex on the Court's internal web site and to document special events for the Court's monthly newsletter, the *Full Court Press*.

Employee Recognition Programs



Annual Awards Ceremonies

Continuing a tradition of recognizing outstanding performance by Clerk's Office employees, the Court held its annual Awards Ceremonies during the week of September 11-15, 2000. Each divisional office hosted a formal ceremony to honor staff and recognize outstanding individuals. Executive Officer/Clerk of Court Jon D. Ceretto welcomed those in attendance, and Chief Judge Geraldine Mund thanked staff for their hard work during the year. All staff received a leather portfolio imprinted with the United States Bankruptcy Court seal. Additional "thank you's" were given by: the Honorable Barry Russell in the Los Angeles Division; the Honorable Mitchel R. Goldberg in the Riverside Division; the Honorable John E. Ryan in the Santa Ana Division; and the Honorable Robin L. Riblet in the Northern Division and Chief Judge Mund in the San Fernando Valley Division. Criteria for the 2000 awards were:

- Implementation of new technology to improve and expand the Court's service capabilities to the public, judges, and members of the bar;
- Sustaining superior performance in supporting the daily operations of the Court;
- Increasing case processing effectiveness while reducing the Court's pending caseload and increasing docketing speed, volume of cases closed, and accuracy; and
- Outstanding customer service that is recognized by the public, judges, supervisors, and peers.

Employee of the Month

Each month, the Court bestows an “Employee of the Month” award to a staff member in the Clerk’s Office who has gone above and beyond the scope of his or her responsibilities to assist the public, help fellow employees, or improve the work environment. At a special monthly ceremony, each winner received a moderate cash award, an “Employee of the Month” certificate, a leather portfolio, and a photograph of the presentation. Additionally, an article spotlighting the employee appeared in the Court’s monthly newsletter, the *Full Court Press*.

Employees of the Month: 2000



Top row (from left):

Jon D. Ceretto, Executive Officer/Clerk; Tina Duarte, Santa Ana (April); Willy Del Mundo, Los Angeles (January); Raoul Mendez, San Fernando Valley (September); Wendy Wesley, Los Angeles (June); Ned Elfrink, Northern Division (July); Renee Moser, Riverside (November)

Front row (from left):

Rosemary Ambriz, Santa Ana (October); Blanca Acosta, Los Angeles (March); Lynn Ly, Los Angeles (August); Cristina Checa, Los Angeles, (December); Dane Hamada, Riverside (May); Kimberly Marquez, Riverside (February)

QUALITY ASSURANCE/TRAINING

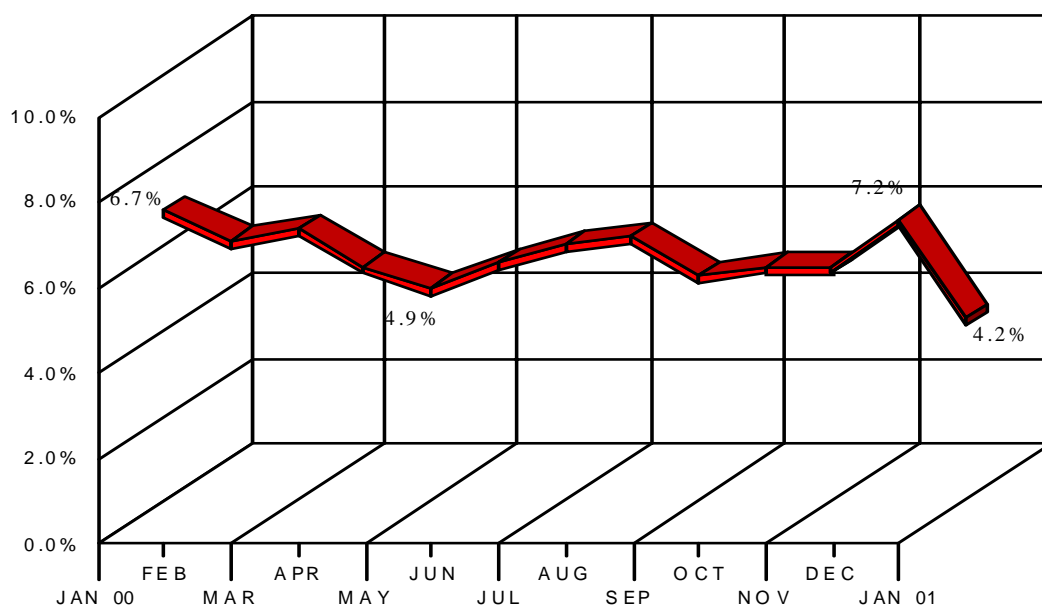
Automated Quality Control Program Introduced

Developed by the Clerk's Office and piloted in the Los Angeles Division, an automated program for the quality control of new petition data was introduced to all divisions. The program standardizes and streamlines the manual quality control process previously in place in each division. Using Visual FoxPro, the new program features user-friendly screens that closely mirror the layout of the bankruptcy petition. In addition to standardizing the quality control process, the new automated program features reporting capabilities that improve the collection and analysis of data, enabling corrective actions to be taken much more quickly. Automated reports help identify training needs and other important trends. Development of a similar automated quality control program for adversary proceedings is currently underway.

Bankruptcy Court Tracks District-Wide Data Entry Errors

While the automated quality control program was under development, the Clerk's Office began tracking errors in the entry of data regarding new bankruptcy petitions in January 2000. After a new petition has been filed and the data has been entered into the Court's cashing system, a quality control of all new petitions is performed. At that time, all errors are corrected prior to the downloading of new petition data into the Court's case management system. The error rate for new petitions with data entry errors declined by 37% from the 6.7% error rate reported in January 2000 to the 4.2% error rate in January 2001. By tracking data entry errors, the Court can easily identify quality control issues and trends that can be addressed through focused training. During 2000, the Court also automated the process of gathering data entry error rates. (See previous article.)

Figure 6
United States Bankruptcy Court - Central District of California
Percent of New Bankruptcy Petitions with Data Entry Errors



Lunch and Learn Program a Continued Success

Established in October 1999, the Los Angeles Division's "Lunch and Learn" program consistently attracts large audiences from the Clerk's Office. Through this program, participating Los Angeles Division judges provide presentations to Clerk's Office staff on topics designed to increase their awareness and understanding of the bankruptcy process. As indicated by the title, the sessions occur during the lunch hour to minimize the impact on operations. Attendance is voluntary. In a first for the program, a presentation by the Honorable Erithe A. Smith entitled *Chapters 7, 11, and 13 as They Relate to Bankruptcy Cases* was videotaped for future viewing by staff in outlying divisions.

Table 8 Lunch and Learn Program: 2000	
Presenter	Bankruptcy-Related Topic
Judge Donovan	Significance of writing opinions once a decision is reached in court.
Judge March	Bankruptcy crimes and the roles of federal agencies that investigate and prosecute the parties.
Judge Robles	Interaction of the Bankruptcy Court and the Office of the United States Trustee, as well as the history and organizational structure.
Judge Russell	Participation of the Central District of California Bankruptcy Court in the Bankruptcy Appellate Panel and pertinent information related to the Panel.
Judge Smith	<i>Chapters 7, 11, and 13 as They Relate to Bankruptcy Cases.</i>
Judge Zurzolo	General appeals issues and questions.

Clerk's Office Participates in Premiere Video Conference Workshop

In March 2000, the Court participated in the Federal Judicial Center's first video conference workshop, *Developing Task-Oriented Documentation*. Staff from all five divisions joined nine other federal court sites throughout the nation by video conference. A high level of interaction between the instructor and participating sites was facilitated by a document camera that enabled participants to review each other's documentation on a "real time" basis.

Court Shares Resources with U. S. Probation Office

During this period, the United States Probation Office participated with Court staff in two Federal Judicial Television Network workshops presented in the Court's training classroom. The workshops - *Structured On-the-Job Training* and *Developing Court Employee Competencies* - utilized "push-to-talk" technology, which allows audience members to ask questions of the trainer at the point of broadcast and to share information with federal agencies throughout the nation.

Court Continues to Develop Staff Skills

As in years past, the Court continued to emphasize the development of skills in the areas of automation, bankruptcy operations, team building, leadership, and general office skills. During 2000, a total of 7,241 hours of training was provided to staff through 309 classes. (See Table 9 on page 31.)

Table 9
District-Wide Training: 2000

Classes		Staff Participant Hours					
Name	Quantity	Total Hours	LA	RS	SA	ND	SFV
AUTOMATION TRAINING							
Abra	2	49	14	7	7	14	7
Bankruptcy Online System	1	20	20	-	-	-	-
Fasat Overview	12	244	244	-	-	-	-
Informix	2	104	104	-	-	-	-
Intellitrak	2	28	-	-	-	14	14
JOGS	3	25	9	-	16	-	-
Microsoft TCP/IP; Windows NT; Internet Info Server	4	160	-	-	-	-	160
Miscellaneous Topics	7	18	14	2	2	-	-
NETWARE/NOVELL	7	400	120	80	80	40	80
Object Oriented Programming	1	6	6	-	-	-	-
Visual RMS	52	125	7	24	58	14	22
WordPerfect 8	39	206	166	24	-	4	12
<i>TOTAL Automation Training</i>	132	1,385	704	137	163	86	295
FJC/AO-SPONSORED PROGRAMS AND FJTN PRESENTATIONS							
Adaptive Manager	2	176	96	14	42	-	24
CMECF	1	12	11	-	-	-	1
Court Employee Competencies	1	58	44	-	10	-	4
Dealing With Difficult People	3	129	92	-	23	-	14
Memory Skills	2	66	66	-	-	-	-
Miscellaneous Topics	22	116	44	12	12	2	46
Overcoming Overload	1	40	34	-	-	-	6
Peer Coaching	1	270	-	-	270	-	-
Structured On-the-Job	3	174	130	-	44	-	-
Supervisors Development	2	29	18	2	5	2	2
Task-Oriented Documentation	3	232	118	50	28	18	18
Teamwork Essentials	2	60	40	-	16	4	-
Working Modules	3	28	-	-	28	-	-
<i>TOTAL FJC/AO/FJTN Programs</i>	46	1,390	693	78	478	26	115
OTHER TRAINING							
Counterfeit Currency Training	2	23	-	-	-	9	14
Disaster Preparedness	6	101	10	46	17	-	28
Domestic & Workplace Violence Connection	1	65	30	10	10	5	10
Extern/Law Clerk Training	3	408	312	30	24	-	42
Hire the Right Person	1	78	36	6	6	12	18
Human Resource and Employee Information	40	1,080	580	281	44	57	118
Lunch and Learn	31	399	223	163	-	13	-
Myers-Briggs Type Indicator	1	133	84	28	-	-	21
Prevention of Workplace Violence	1	105	72	11	11	-	11
Professional Development	22	787	551	62	39	16	119
Refresher Procurement Training	1	23	23	-	-	-	-
The Public: How Do We Deal With Them?	1	58	58	-	-	-	-
Train the Trainer	1	640	350	80	105	35	70
Workers' Compensation	6	43	14	12	7	3	7
Working Together	11	463	282	-	66	25	90
Writing Skills	3	60	40	20	-	-	-
<i>TOTAL Other Training</i>	131	4,466	2,665	749	329	175	548
GRAND TOTAL	309	7,241	4,062	964	970	287	958

TECHNOLOGY

Case Management Software Enhancements Introduced District-Wide

Improving the Court's excellent levels of customer service and the efficient management of the largest number of bankruptcy filings in the nation, the Clerk's Office has added more than 60 automation enhancements to the Court's case management system since it was introduced in November 1994. Some of the new enhancements to the Court's case management system that were made during the year included:

- **“Auto Closing of Discharged Cases” Program** - Using criteria established by operations staff, the Information Technology Division developed a new program, known as the Auto Closing of Discharged Cases program, that automatically closes discharged chapter 7 no-asset cases. Representing approximately 75% of all cases closed by the Clerk's Office, this automation enhancement saves hundreds of staff hours by automatically docketing the Order Closing Case, updating the case status in NIBS, and generating the statistical data required by the Administrative Office. Furthermore, the new program automatically creates an image of the Order Closing Case, eliminating the need to scan these documents and their corresponding bar-coded cover sheets, and automatically generates a printed copy for the case file. Following extensive testing, the program was piloted by the Fast Track Section of the Los Angeles Division in February 2000 and was made available to all divisions in May 2000.
- **“Auto Closing of Dismissed Cases” Program** - Originally introduced in 1998 as the prototype for the Auto Closing of Discharged Cases program, the Auto Closing of Dismissed Cases program was upgraded to include many of the features in the newer Auto Closing of Discharged Cases program. The upgrade introduced in July 2000 automatically generates an image of the Order Closing Case that is attached to the online case file. This enhancement saves time previously required to scan and link the image to the online case file.
- **CMatrix Program** - Developed by the Clerk's Office, the CMatrix program was designed to eliminate the duplicate scanning of the creditor matrices that are required in all bankruptcy cases. Prior to CMatrix, clerks scanned the creditor matrix twice, once to import names and addresses of creditors into the case management system (NIBS) and a second time to generate an electronic image for the online case file. After extensive piloting at the Los Angeles Division, the new time-saving system enhancement was implemented in all divisions during May 2000.

FAS₄T Automated Financial System Implemented After Extensive Preparation

After six months of planning, training, and testing, the Court went “live” on October 2, 2000, with the Financial Accounting System for Tomorrow (FAS₄T), an automated accounting system. FAS₄T, a multi-user program replacing the Automated Spending and Procurement system (ASAP), is a centralized accounting system utilized by the entire court family (i.e., Bankruptcy Court, District Court, Probation, Federal Public Defender’s Office, and Pretrial Services). In addition to processing purchase orders and payment authorizations for vendor payables, unclaimed funds, trustee fees, refunds, and travel vouchers, FAS₄T has an online budget approval feature that reduces processing time. All staff involved in the accounts payable and budget processes participated in training and testing sessions for three months prior to the implementation of the system. Prior to implementation, the Clerk’s Office modified FAS₄T to improve the purchasing, payment, and systems security procedures. The Clerk’s Office also reviewed and converted unliquidated obligations and fully documented the procedures related to validity testing. As a result of the extensive planning, the transition to the new system went smoothly.

Court Provided Access to District Court’s Attorney Admissions Database

Judges and selected chambers staff were provided with access to the District Court’s Attorney Admission database in 2000. Computer screen icons provide easy access to the database, enabling users to quickly verify an attorney’s admission status at the District Court.

Use of Video Conference Hearing Technology Expanded

Video conference hearing technology continued to afford the Court increased flexibility in the case assignment process. This technology enables a judge to carry a caseload in two or more divisions by eliminating the time, cost, and inconvenience associated with travel between divisional offices.

- **Intra-District Case Assignments Managed Through Video**

The Honorable James N. Barr and the Honorable John E. Ryan of the Santa Ana Division continued to receive cases from the Riverside Division on a routine basis and hear matters related to Riverside Division cases from their Santa Ana Division courtrooms through video conference hearing technology.

Until February 2000, the Honorable Ellen Carroll utilized video conference hearing technology to conduct hearings for her caseload, which was split between the Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley divisions. At that time, adjustments to the case assignment wheel were made. Judge Carroll began receiving cases only from the Los Angeles Division, while the Honorable Robin L. Riblet began receiving a partial caseload from the San Fernando Valley Division.

- **Other Notable Uses of Video Conference Hearing Technology**

During 2000, several other notable uses of video conference hearing technology occurred in the district.

- The Honorable Thomas T. Glover, acting as a visiting judge, used video conferencing to hear numerous Los Angeles Division adversary proceedings from his Seattle, Washington courtroom.
- The Honorable John E. Ryan conducted a hearing with witnesses in Leeds, England appearing by video conference, witnesses in Maine appearing by teleconference, and more than a dozen people appearing in his Santa Ana courtroom.
- While visiting the Los Angeles Division to perform her duties as Chief Judge, Chief Judge Mund utilizes video conferencing to hear her San Fernando Valley calendars.
- The Honorable Robert W. Alberts held hearings from a Dallas, Texas courtroom while the litigants appeared at the Santa Ana Division.
- The Bankruptcy Appellate Panel consisting of the Honorable Philip H. Brandt of Tacoma, Washington; the Honorable Christopher M. Klein of Sacramento, California; and the Honorable James M. Marlar of Phoenix, Arizona; heard appeals in the Santa Ana Division on January 20, 2000. Court was held in the Special Proceedings Courtroom and related cases were heard via video conferencing.
- In October 2000, Judge John L. Peterson from the Bankruptcy Court, District of Montana provided assistance with adversary proceedings assigned to Judge Carroll by video conference from Montana.
- Judges at the Santa Ana Division participated by video conference in a meeting held at the Riverside Division where the Riverside Division judges and over 70 attorneys discussed chapter 13 procedures.
- Judicial committees also utilize video conferencing on a regular basis to conduct intra-district meetings, including the: Executive Committee, Rules Committee, Chapter 13 Committee, U.S. Trustee Liaison Committee, Education and Training Committee, and *Pro Se* Committee. This saves considerable time and expense which would otherwise be associated with travel to these meetings.

- **Video Conferencing Prototype Completed**

A prototype for an improved infrastructure and upgraded video conference equipment was successfully tested in a Los Angeles Division courtroom. By the end of 2000, construction to upgrade all Los Angeles Division courtrooms to the new video conference infrastructure was in progress and drawings for the courtrooms in the Court's other divisions were forwarded to GSA for pricing. The standardized infrastructure improves the ability of staff to set up for hearings involving the use of video conferencing. In addition, the new video systems will be easier for the judges to operate and offer more screen configurations, affording the judges more flexibility in selecting courtroom views.

Technical Support for Court Users Aided by Tracking Software

The Information Technology Division (ITD) installed TrackIt software in all divisions by April 2000 to better monitor the support provided by technical staff to users of Court computers. First initiated in the Los Angeles Division in February 2000, the system compiles statistics from all divisions in a consistent manner and improves ITD's ability to allocate resources efficiently. TrackIt also enables the Court to determine the reliability of hardware and software applications.

Backup Power Improved for Roybal Building Computer Servers

A Symmetra Universal Power Supply with battery backup was installed in the Los Angeles Division, enabling the servers to shut down in an orderly manner in the event of an interruption in electrical service in the Roybal Building. The system detects power fluctuations and minimizes the possibility of data corruption resulting from a sudden power surge or outage.

Remote Computer Access to Los Angeles Server Improved

The Citrix server pressed into action during the week of the Democratic National Convention (see related article on page 23) proved to be a remarkable automation tool for providing remote computer access. Originally purchased to improve remote access from the divisions to both Intellitrack (the fixed-asset inventory system) and Abra (the human resources system), the Citrix server was utilized to provide remote access to the Court's cashiering system (ICS), case management system (NIBS), judicial interface to NIBS (Chambers Look-Up), and hearing calendars (CCP). The Citrix server improves application performance, as this high-powered server performs application processing and only transmits screen updates to the user over the network.

Routine Exchange of Backup Tapes Improves Disaster Recovery Preparedness

To improve the Court's ability to recover vital data in the event of a disaster without the cost of an outside service, ITD began piloting the transfer of backup tapes between two of its divisions on a daily basis. The usual daily backup tapes include user files, electronic dockets, and online case files. Once a week, the backup tapes also include program files that take longer to backup and generally have few modifications. This process of exchanging tapes on a daily and weekly basis will be expanded to all five divisions.

Time Spent in Court Report

The Clerk's Office developed a user-friendly system that automates the tracking of the time judges spent in court. The automated time-keeping system enables the divisions to generate consolidated monthly reports of time spent in court that are required by the Administrative Office (AO). The new system, made available district-wide in October 2000, reduces clerical processes while improving the accuracy of these reports.

Cashiering Printers Upgraded

All cashiering windows throughout the district were upgraded with new LaserJet printers by January 2000. Replacing noisy dot matrix printers, the Hewlett Packard 4000 LaserJet printers improved the clarity of labels used for new bankruptcy case filings, adversary proceedings, and motions, as well as receipts and cashiering reports. The new printers enable the cashiers to print images of online case files, deficiency notices, orders to comply, and rejection notices - documents that were previously produced in back offices. The new LaserJet printers are faster and less noisy than the replaced matrix printers, and the overall appearance of printed material is much more professional. Small Epson printers were also installed at each cashiering window for the endorsement of checks.

Electronic-Filing (E-Filing) Coming Into Focus

The Clerk's Office conducted a comprehensive review of the Case Management/Electronic Case Filing system (CM/ECF) developed by the AO, as well as other electronic filing (e-filing) options. A CM/ECF team from the AO that included Melvin J. Bryson, Assistant Director of the Office of Information Technology, and Gary L. Bockweg, Project Manager for the CM/ECF project, provided an in-depth demonstration and participated in a subsequent discussion of CM/ECF at the September 15, 2000 Board of Judges meeting. The initial version of CM/ECF does not include over 60 automation enhancements the Court has developed for its current case management system which provide significant labor savings and improved case management. Although it was apparent the early version of CM/ECF did not meet the needs of the Central District, there was optimism about a cooperative effort at a later time between the AO and the Court to incorporate into the CM system those features which the Court finds essential.

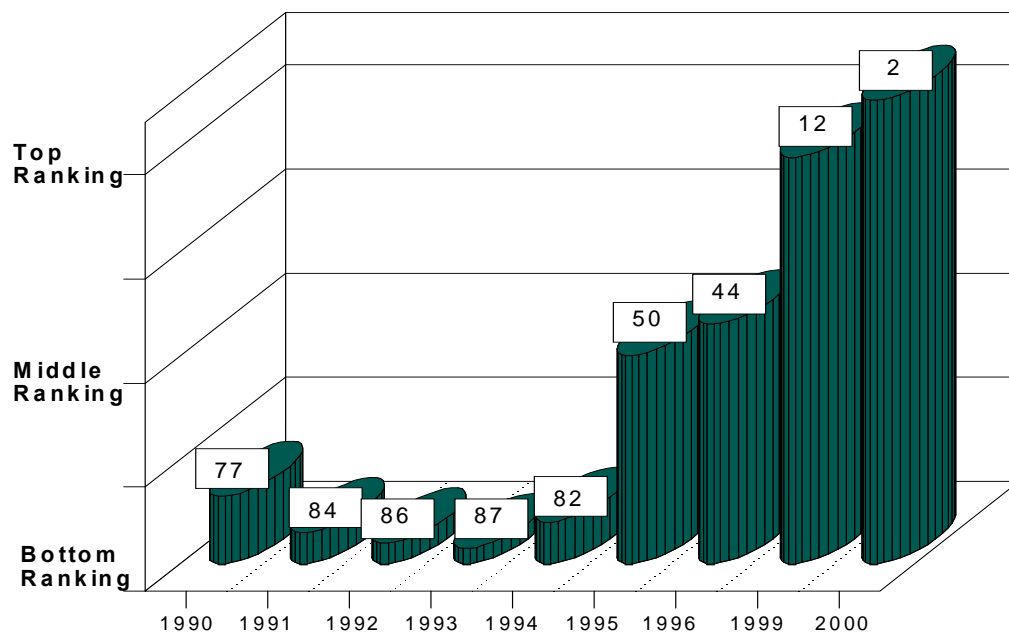
CASE ADMINISTRATION

Bankruptcy Court Achieves Extraordinary Improvement in Case Management

Based on an analysis of the *Bankruptcy Program Indicators*, a series of statistical and case processing measures published by the Administrative Office on a quarterly basis, the Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California has become one of the most efficient bankruptcy courts in the nation. Although the Administrative Office no longer ranks districts, the Court's case processing performance can be inferred from the most recently released report (for the 12-month period ending December 31, 2000). Based on the 16 case processing factors measured by the *Indicators*, the Court would rank second out of the 90 bankruptcy court districts in the nation. When compared to other large bankruptcy court districts receiving over 20,000 filings per year, the Court would achieve the highest overall ranking. This performance represents an extraordinary improvement when compared to the bottom 10% ranking held by the Court from 1991 through 1994. (See Figure 7 below.)

In addition to providing comparisons with other bankruptcy courts throughout the nation, the *Bankruptcy Program Indicators* are also utilized by the Court to track its case management performance. (See Table 10 next page.) From December 1999 to December 2000, the Court improved or maintained its performance in nine out of the 11 case processing categories measured by the *Bankruptcy Program Indicators*. Further, the Court exceeds the national average in 15 out of 16 measures and is in the top 10% in eight of the 16 measures. Surpassing the most optimistic projections made just a few years ago, the Court achieved this phenomenal success through effective goal setting, streamlined operations, and the integration of well-designed automation enhancements.

Figure 7
United States Bankruptcy Court - Central District of California
Case Processing Ranking Out of 90 Districts: 1990-2000*



*No rankings done for 1997 and 1998.

Table 10
Bankruptcy Program Indicators
12 Months Ending December 31, 2000

Chapter 7 Cases	National Average	Central District of California			
		2000	1999	1998	1997
Median Disposition Time	4.0 mos	3.6 mos	3.6 mos	3.9 mos	4.3 mos
% Open After 6 Months	15.1%	4.9%	5.4%	7.8%	10.7%
% Open After 12 Months	7.1%	1.7%	1.7%	2.3%	4.3%
% Open After 36 Months	1.4%	0.4%	0.6%	1.0%	1.1%
Average Age of Pending Cases	10.1 mos	5.3 mos			
Chapter 13 Cases					
Median Disposition Time	36.6 mos	10.9 mos	13.5 mos	15.9 mos	16.0 mos
% Open After 6 Months	89.1%	62.4%	65.6%	81.8%	75.0%
% Open After 36 Months	40.6%	11.6%	14.6%	17.0%	20.6%
% Open After 72 Months	2.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.4%
Average Age of Pending Cases	23.7 mos	18.5 mos			
Chapter 11 Cases					
% Open After 48 Months	17.9%	13.2%	16.6%	14.8%	16.4%
Average Age of Pending Cases	44.0 mos	40.6 mos			
Adversary Proceedings					
Dischargeability (11 U.S.C. § 523) Median Disposition Time	6.2 mos	5.1 mos	5.6 mos	6.0 mos	6.7 mos
Average Age of Pending Cases	19.0 mos	9.0 mos			
Other than Dischargeability Median Disposition Time	6.7 mos	7.8 mos	7.2 mos	8.2 mos	8.5 mos
Average Age of Pending Cases	33.7 mos	14.2 mos			

Pending Caseload Reduced to Lowest Level Since 1983

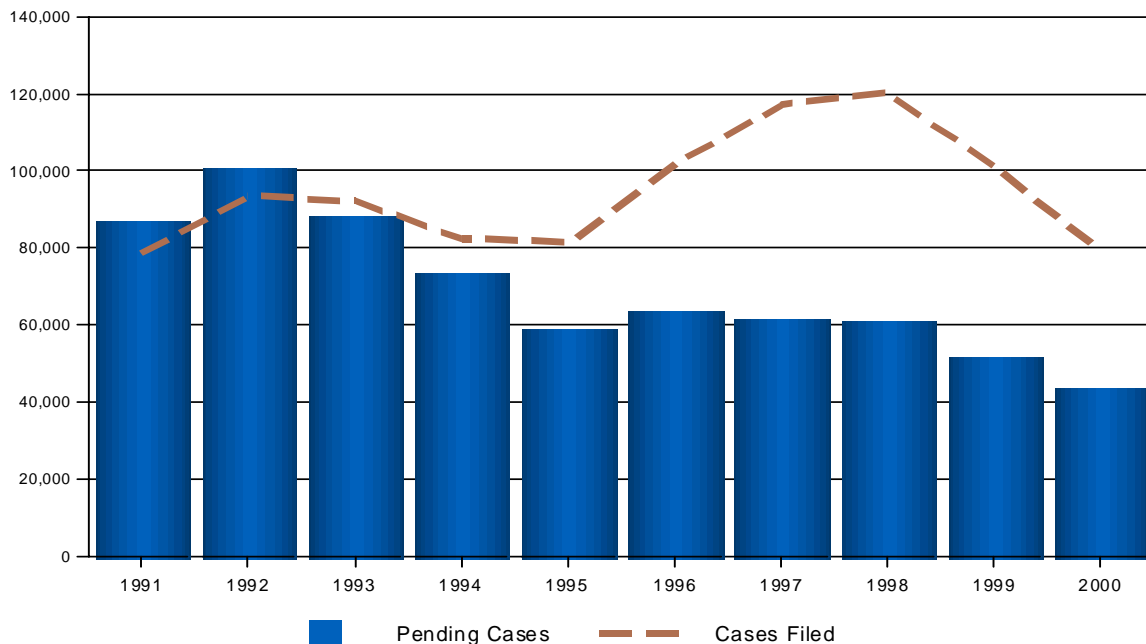
During 2000, the Bankruptcy Court's pending caseload was reduced to its lowest level since 1983. As of December 31, 2000, a total of 43,517 bankruptcy cases were pending, a 16% decrease from the 51,741 cases pending at the end of 1999 and a 58% decrease from the record 103,207 cases pending in August 1992, the highest level in the Court's history. Continued development of case management tools and case closing automation by the Court, in addition to the setting of meaningful case closing goals, have been instrumental in achieving this reduction. (See Figure 8 next page.)

Not only has the number of pending cases dropped, but the age of the pending caseload has improved. Since 1995 (the first year for which information is available), the Court has made significant reductions in the percentage of older cases that remain pending. (See Table 11 below.)

Table 11
Central District of California - United States Bankruptcy Court
Analysis of Pending Case Aging: 1995 vs. 2000

	Pending Case Aging Category	12/31/95	12/31/00	Percent Change
Chapter 7	Percent 4 Months or Less	56.4%	78.5%	39.2%
	Percent over 6 Years	4.7%	1.6%	66.0%
Chapter 11	Percent over 6 Years	18.5%	10.2%	44.9%
Chapter 13	Percent 3 Years or Less	82.2%	83.8%	1.9%
	Percent over 5 Years	5.0%	1.0%	80.0%
Adversary Proceedings	Percent 1 Year or Less	64.2%	67.2%	5.0%
	Percent over 3 Years	13.9%	7.7%	44.6%

Figure 8
Central District of California - United States Bankruptcy Court
Pending Caseload vs. Bankruptcy Filings: 1991-2000



Electronic Images of Bankruptcy-Related Orders Now E-Mailed from District Court

In June 2000, the District Court began routing electronic images of dispositive orders entered in bankruptcy appeals to the Los Angeles Division by e-mail for distribution throughout the Court. Upon receipt, the Clerk's Office immediately forwards the electronic images by e-mail to the appropriate judge and designated staff. The new electronic routing method substantially reduces the delivery time of the orders that are routed to the Bankruptcy Court and enables the simultaneous review of the orders by judicial and Clerk's Office staff. In addition, the electronic routing is a more reliable delivery method than inter-office mail. In the first six months, 30 orders were forwarded through this electronic routing method.

Facilitated by Automation, Court Balances Caseload Upon Judge Fenning's Departure

Following the resignation of the Honorable Lisa Hill Fenning (see page 8), the Clerk's Office reassigned her pending cases and revised the case assignment wheels in the Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley divisions to balance the caseload. A program developed by the Clerk's Office reassigned all pending matters in a timely manner among eight judges. Reports were created to identify case reassignment exceptions so that discrepancies could be quickly resolved. Upon Judge Fenning's departure, the automated program created an entry reassigning the case to the new judge, linked an image of the reassignment order to the appropriate docket entry, and updated the judge assignment in both the Court's case management system (NIBS) and at the Administrative Office. Through effective analysis and planning, this project was successfully executed by May 1, 2000, the day after Judge Fenning's departure.

Docketing Performance Continues to Excel/Imaging Standards Introduced

To ensure efficient case processing, the Clerk's Office tracks the time it takes to enter a document on the bankruptcy case or adversary proceeding docket from the day it is filed with the Court. The Time-to-Docket goals are comprised of a series of targets that measure the number of days it takes to docket orders and other items. These goals generate a great deal of friendly competition among the five divisions. During 2000, the Clerk's Office docketed a remarkable 91% of the 3,073,243 documents filed with the Court within one day of filing (excluding automated entries), a continuation of the excellent docketing performance achieved in 1999. (See Figure 9 next page.)

Recognizing the value of timely access to online case file documents, the Clerk's Office added Time-to-Image performance categories to the Time-to-Docket performance measures in May 2000. The new combined measures, known as T.I.D.E. (Time-to-Image/Docket Excellence), track the time it takes for a document to be imaged from the date it was entered on the case docket. Since the introduction of the Time-to-Image performance category, nearly 90% of all items were imaged within one day of docketing. (See Figure 10 next page.)

Records Archived

The Central District of California sent 259,564 closed bankruptcy case files and 14,234 closed adversary proceeding to the National Archives and Records Administration for archiving in 2000. As such, the Court's archiving efforts greatly exceeded the 90,948 bankruptcy case files and 5,204 adversary proceeding files that were archived in 1999. The extraordinary increase in the number of files archived during 2000 resulted from efforts by the Los Angeles Division to safeguard Court records in advance of the Democratic National Convention. (See related article, *Court Demonstrates Ability to Manage Offsite Operations During the Democratic National Convention*, page 23.) The total number of records archived by the Los Angeles Division in 2000 was more than twice the number of records archived by the *entire* district in 1999. The following table outlines the archiving activity that occurred in each division during 2000.

Table 12

Records Sent to the National Archives and Records Administration in 2000

	Los Angeles	Riverside	Santa Ana	Northern	San Fernando Valley	Total
Bankruptcy Cases	186,681	25,615	15,103	5,924	26,241	259,564
Adversary Proceedings	10,196	846	1,101	433	1,658	14,234

Figure 9
Central District of California - United States Bankruptcy Court
% of All Items *Docketed* Within One Day of Filing:
July 1998 through December 2000

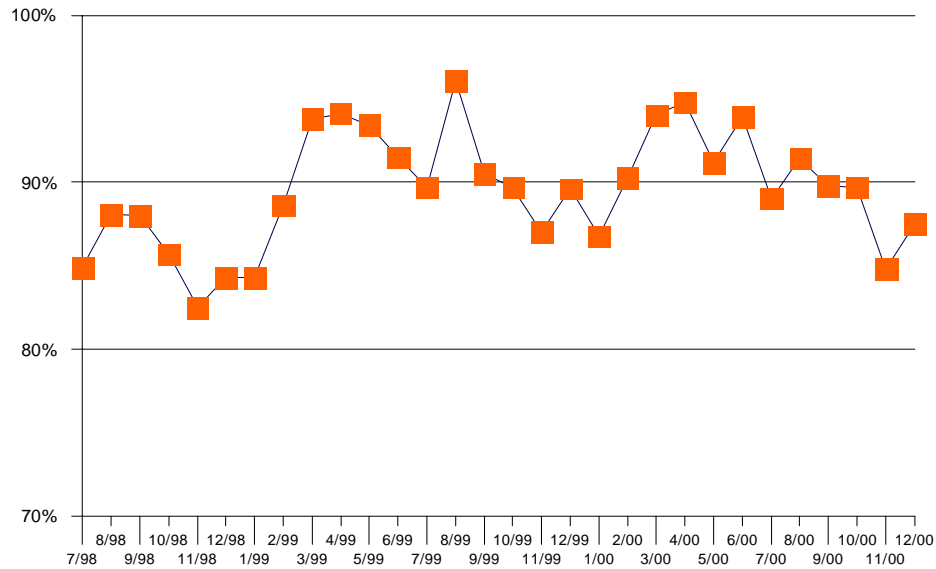
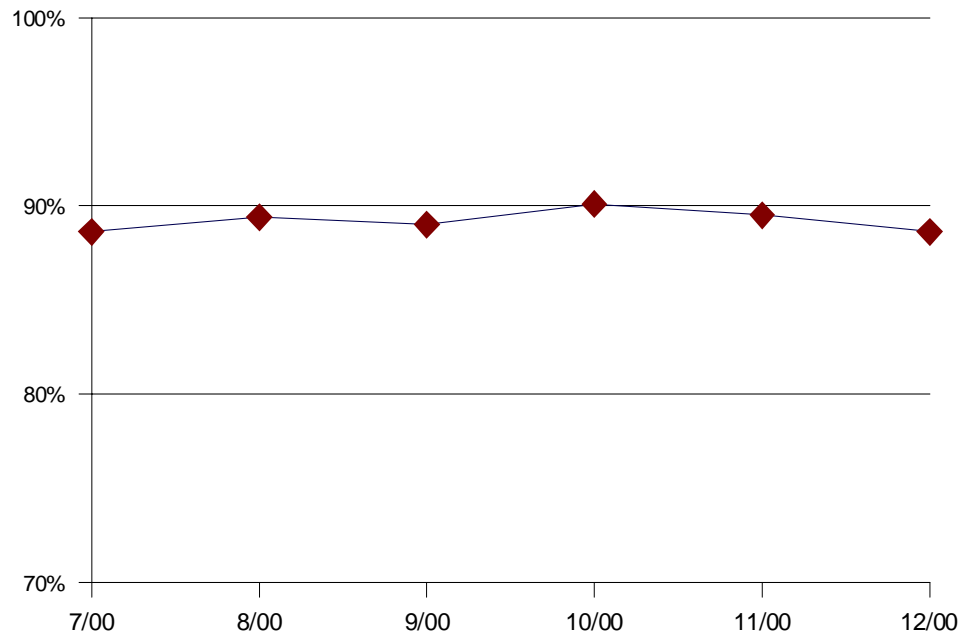


Figure 10
Central District of California - United States Bankruptcy Court
% of All Items *Imaged* Within One Day of Docketing:
July 2000 through December 2000



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Court Employees Increase Charitable Contributions

In 2000, Court employees contributed \$46,555 to a variety of charities through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC), representing a 1.6% increase over the \$45,805 contributed in 1999. Established in 1961, the CFC is the only authorized charitable campaign in the federal government workplace. Through the CFC, Court employees contribute money to hundreds of different non-profit organizations. In addition to monetary support, the Court assisted local CFC efforts by providing a "loaned executive." The loaned executive coordinated efforts between CFC workers at 36 different government agencies, helping them to determine and achieve contribution goals.

Table 13
Combined Federal Campaign (CFC): 1999-2000

Division	1999 Dollars	2000 Dollars	Percent Change	1999 Donors	2000 Donors	Percent Change
Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley	\$32,520	\$33,654	3.5%	202	210	4.0%
Riverside	5,238	5,933	13.3%	32	41	28.1%
Santa Ana	7,450	6,212	-16.6%	37	26	-29.7%
Northern	597	756	26.6%	14	13	-7.1%
TOTAL	\$45,805	\$46,555	1.6%	285	290	1.8%

Court Continues Support for Summer Youth Programs

As in past years, the Court hosted a number of high school student workers through various summer youth programs in local communities. These programs enable the Court to help young adults develop general office skills and a professional work ethic. Through the Summer Youth Employment Training Program, four high school students assisted the Santa Ana Division. The San Fernando Valley Division hosted three high school students through two programs - one sponsored by the One-Stop Workforce and Industry Center and the other by the Los Angeles Unified School District. The Northern Division also hosted a local high school student from the program sponsored by the Santa Barbara County Education Office.

Participation in Youth Day 2000 Largest Ever

The Court held the largest Youth Day in its history on April 27, 2000, with over 225 children in attendance. Through imaginative, well-organized programs coordinated by Court staff in each division, Youth Day improved the children's understanding of the Court and the importance of the work performed by their parents/sponsors. Children participated in mock trials, toured neighboring agencies, took part in educational games, and enjoyed a variety of other activities.



**Los Angeles
Division**

**Santa Ana
Division**



Caregiver Support Group Initiated

In February 2000, the Riverside Division held its first meeting of the “Caregivers in the Workplace” support group. The meetings are facilitated by the Inland Caregiver Resource Center, a private, non-profit organization serving family caregivers of persons with adult-onset brain disorders (e.g., Alzheimer’s multi-infarct disease, stroke or aneurysm, Parkinson’s disease, Huntington’s disease, Multiple Sclerosis, etc.). The group meets during lunch twice a month to discuss the challenges of juggling the competing demands of work, family, and care giving. One of the additional benefits of the group is that those attending receive the emotional and practical support needed to cope with the stress of being a caregiver.

Los Angeles Division Coordinates Federal Agency Blood Drive

Acting as the lead agency, the Court coordinated with the Red Cross and neighboring federal agencies to collect blood at the Los Angeles Division. Agencies participating in the blood drive - the Court’s first - included the District Court, the Department of Justice, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Metropolitan Detention Center. The effort was a success, collecting 26 pints of life-saving blood.

Court Participates in “Major League Job and Information Fair”

In February 2000, Court Resources representatives participated in the “Major League Job and Information Fair” sponsored by the East Los Angeles Service Center Employment Development Department. Co-sponsored by the Los Angeles Dodgers, the Department of Water and Power, and elected officials from the City of Los Angeles, the event drew approximately 1,200 job seekers from the local community. Court Resources representatives provided information regarding current openings to job seekers and distributed an Employment Information Brochure, an employment application, and an explanation of the Court’s benefits package.

Funds and Awareness Raised in the Support of Cancer Patients

The Los Angeles, Northern, and San Fernando Valley divisions participated in the American Cancer Society’s “Daffodil Days” event. This program provide services to cancer patients such as low cost mammographies, transportation to and from medical treatment, prosthesis fitting, and other services. In addition, this annual event also increases awareness of the support provided by numerous agencies throughout the community to those battling cancer.